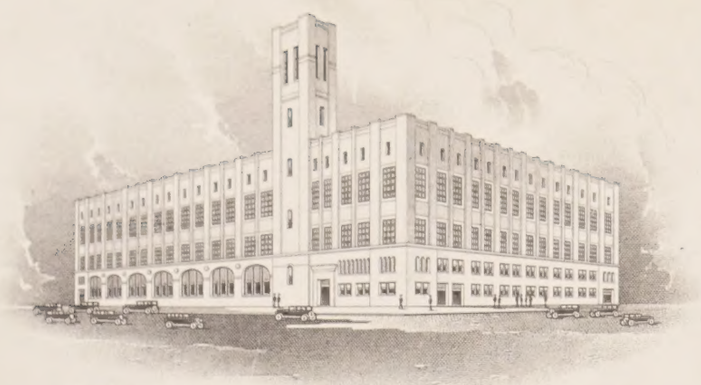
Subject: 1804 dollar

Waugh, Earle R.

[The Pittsburg Press
Pittsburgh, PA]

1928



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THE PITTSBURGH PRESS

A SCRIPPS-HOWARD NEWSPAPER

LARGEST DAILY AND SUNDAY CIRCULATION

PITTSBURGH, PA. Mar. 16th. 1928.

Mr. Sydney P. Noe,
American Numismatic Society,
New York City,
N.Y.

Dear Mr. Noe:-

Having been informed that you may be able to help me on a story on which I have been working for some time, I take the liberty of writing to you for some information as suggested by the Washington Bureau of the Pittsburgh Press.

No doubt you have read considerable recently about the 1804 dollar. There is some talk that 19,570 dollars were coined in 1804 while a coin man in our city denies that any were coined or circulated in that year but that the first 1804 dollar appeared in circulation in 1843.

I am trying to get facts on this subject and will appreciate anything you can do to help me out. I plan to write a story and have been trying to get all the data I can before going ahead.

The Press Bureau furnished me with information that the report of the director of the United States mint for 1927 discloses that 19,750 dollars of the year mentioned were coined. There appears to be something "fishy" about this coin and anything I can dig up I believe, will prove interesting to the general public.

Very Truly Yours,

Earle R. Waugh

Earle R. Waugh,
THE PITTSBURGH PRESS,
Pittsburgh, Pa.

WANT AD HEADQUARTERS
254 FIFTH AVENUE

19th March, 1928

Mr. Earle R. Waugh,
The Pittsburg Press,
Pittsburg, Pa.

Dear Sir:

Your letter to Mr. Noe has been handed to me for reply. I see that you intend to bring up again that numismatic bugbear, the 1804 dollar. More money, energy, and ink has been wasted on this piece than it deserves. It is only kept alive by periodical newspaper stories that are undoubtedly false, but which of course make good reading to the public ignorant on the subject.

Although the Mint report does state that 19,570 dollars were coined in 1804, it also states that 321 were coined in 1805. These figures may or may not tell the story, but even the Mint acknowledges that some of their figures in the early days were inaccurate. Some of the earlier reports give this note under the table of Coinage of the Mints of the United States by Calender Years: 'Note: Not susceptible of exact statement by years of actual date of coin, the registry of annual coinage being of coins delivered by coiners of mints within the given year and these deliveries not having been invariably completed within the year of the date of coin as now recorded.' From this one can see that a lot of coins could have been made in 1803 but not delivered until the next year. Again, we do know that they often used a die until it was worn out regardless of what date it bore.

The early Mint reports are full of other discrepancies. They do not report any half-dollars coined in 1796 and yet we have half-dollars bearing this date. They also state that quarter-dollars were coined in 1797; none are known, and so forth.

The first 1804 dollar known was somewhere around 1840. The dies for this were in the Mint and several pieces were coined on order for collectors at that time, several more some years later, and several more about 1877. Shortly after this the dies were destroyed.

Very truly yours,